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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/02/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EUN](#) [BO](#) [OSCE](#) [EZ](#)
SUBJECT: CZECHS ON JOINT U.S.-EU STATEMENT TO LUKASHENKO:
JUST DO IT

REF: 2005 STATE 232581

Classified By: CDA Michael Dodman for reasons 1.4 b+d.

11. (C) CDA and Poloff met January 3 with Tomas Szunyog, Czech MFA's Director of the Eastern Europe Department, to discuss the proposed U.S.-EU joint statement to Belarus President Lukashenko urging him not to run in the presidential election. Szunyog said the Czechs' support the U.S. position 100%, but warned that some other EU states will not accept the strong language in the current version of the statement. Szunyog urged the U.S. to be flexible when negotiating the final text, and emphasized that the actual text of the statement is far less important than delivering a joint statement as soon as possible.

12. (C) On the issue of V-4 observers for the March presidential election in Belarus, Szunyog said the Czechs may be willing to participate in monitoring, but he questioned the value of monitoring this election for the following reasons. First, as a practical matter, there is insufficient time to prepare a "long-term" monitoring campaign with the election just two months away. Second, he questioned the utility of monitoring the election if Lukashenko's candidacy is deemed illegal, as a Lukashenko victory would be invalid by definition. (Further to this comment, Szunyog suggested that the U.S. and the EU should decide in advance how they will react when Lukashenko wins the election, as is expected.) Third, election monitoring is arguably unnecessary because ballot stuffing isn't the problem. Rather, the problem is that the campaign itself is unfair: opposition candidates have no access to media, and groups cannot protest the Lukashenko regime. Nevertheless, Szunyog said the Czechs would support the decision of the ODIHR. He added the Hungarians have agreed to take the lead among V-4 countries if the election is monitored.

DODMAN